

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BANGKO 36178 271231Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----015493 271236Z /12

P R 271016Z DEC 77  
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6773  
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG  
AMEMBASSY PARIS

S E C R E T BANGKOK 36178

EXDIS

NOFORN

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1  
TAGS: PDIP, US, VM, TH EAID  
SUBJECT: US AND THAI RELATIONS WITH VIET-NAM

REF: (A) BANGKOK 35346 (B) STATE 304802

1. AS SUGGESTED REF B, CHARGE ON DEC 27 BRIEFED MFA DIRGEN POLITICAL DEPARTMENT OWART ON THIRD ROUND US-SRV TALKS. ALSO PROVIDED HIM A COPY OF THE EXCERPTS FROM ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE'S OPENING REMARKS AS CONTAINED REF B. OWART EXPRESSED GREAT APPRECIATION FOR BRIEFING AND INFORMED US THAT DATE FOR SRV DEPUTY PM AND FONMIN NGUYEN DUY TRIANH'S VISIT TO THAILAND HAS NOW BEEN SET FOR JAN 9-12, FOLLOWING VISITS BY TRINH TO VIENTIANE (CURRENTLY), RANGOON, JAKARTA, KUALA LUMPUR, AND THE PHILIPPINES. HE ALSO INFORMED US THAT AN SRV ADVANCE TEAM WILL ARRIVE IN BANGKOK JAN 4 IN PREPARATION FOR TRINH'S VISIT.

2. IN ANTICIPATION OF TRINH'S VISIT, OWART EXPRESSED PARTICULAR INTEREST IN THE VIETNAMESE ATTITUDE AT OUR LATEST PARIS MEETING TOWARD QUESTIONS OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND LINKAGE TO WAR REPARATIONS. SPECIFICALLY OWART ASKED IF WE  
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WOULD GIVE HIM A CLOSER READING ON WHETHER THERE WAS ANY EVOLUTION OF THE VIETNAMESE ATTITUDE TOWARD ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FROM THE US FOR INSTANCE, IN RECENT TALKS DIC PHAN HIEN CONTINUE TO LINK AID TO HEALING THE WOUNDS OF WAR, AS HANOI HAS DONE IN THE PAST AND AS PHAN HIEN DID WITH THE THAIS IN AUGUST 76? MORE GENERALLY, OWART ASKED WHETHER WE DETECT A SOFTENING OF HANOI'S ATTITUDE ON THE QUESTION

OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FROM THE U.S. DIRECTLY LINKED TO WAR REPARATIONS.

3. OWART TOLD US THAT MFA IS REVIEWING THE VIETNAM MAP MILITARY EQUIPMENT ISSUE. READING FROM RTG HISTORICAL RECORD, HE NOTED THAT PRG AND DRV DELEGATIONS, REPRESENTING RESPECTIVELY SVN AND NVN AT THE TIME, VISITED BANGKOK IN MAY, 1975, AND DEMANDED RETURN OF CERTAIN "MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND AIRCRAFT". DURING FORMER FONMIN PHICHA'S NEGOTIATIONS WITH HANOI IN AUGUST, 1976, ON ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, SRV VICE FONMIN PHAN HIEN HAD SUGGESTED THAT ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FROM BANGKOK MIGHT BE A MEANS TO RESOLVE THE MILITARY EQUIPMENT ISSUE. "RETURN OF THE EQUIPMENT" WAS, NEVERTHELESS, INCLUDED IN THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE, SIGNED BY PHICHA AND PHAN HIEN, AS A SUBJECT WHICH COULD BE ADDRESSED LATER BY HANOI AND BANGKOK.

4. OWART SAID THAT THE VIETNAMESE HAVE NOT RECENTLY RAISED THIS ISSUE BUT FONMIN TRINH MIGHT DO SO DURING HIS FORTHCOMING VISIT. MFA IS DEBATING WHETHER PHAN HIEN'S 1976 SUGGESTION ON AID IN LIEU OF RETURN OF THE MILITARY EQUIPMENT REPRESENTED A SOFTENING OF HANOI'S POSITION AND A WILLINGNESS TO ALLOW THE ISSUE TO FADE, OR WHETHER HANOI WILL ASSUME A POSTURE DEMANDING ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE IN LIEU OF THE EQUIPMENT, THEREBY USING THE MILITARY EQUIPMENT ISSUE FOR MORAL LEVERAGE. OWART SAID THAT EARLIER RTV

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POSITION REGARDED THE DISPOSITION OF THE MILITARY EQUIPMENT AS A MATTER FOR RESOLUTION BY THE PARTIES DIRECTLY INVOLVED, I.E., THE U.S. AND VN. HE IMPLIED THAT THIS WOULD CONTINUE TO BE THE THAI POSITION.

5. COMMENT: EMBASSY REQUESTS ANY ELABORATION ON VIETNAMESE ATTITUDES LINKING ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AND WAR REPARATIONS DEPARTMENT IS WILLING TO PROVIDE THE THAIS. IT WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE GREATLY APPRECIATED. IN THAT REGARD, WOULD NOTE FOR THE FIRST TIME OWART FELT OPEN AND UNCONSTRAINED IN DISCUSSING CURRENT STATE OF PLAY WITH VIETNAMESE. WE WOULD LIKE TO BE RESPONSIVE.

6. WITHOUT MAKING ISSUE OF MATTER, WE ALSO INTEND QUIETLY TO REMIND OWART THAT THE USG CONSIDERS EQUIPMENT TAKEN FROM VIET-NAM AT THE CLOSE OF THE WAR AS MAP PROPERTY RETURNED TO THE USG. IN PRACTICAL TERMS, ONLY REMAINING EQUIPMENT HERE IS THAT TRANSFERRED TO THAIS, WITH CUSTOMARY CONDITION THAT RESALE OR OTHER DISPOSAL TO THIRD COUNTRIES IS SUBJECT TO USG APPROVAL. IF DEPARTMENT WISHES TO MODIFY OR ADD TO THIS POSITION, PLEASE ADVISE.

O'DONOHUE

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## Message Attributes

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